

Kawayu Eco-museum Center

The Kawayu Eco-museum Center is a museum and visitor center, centrally located in the Kawayu Onsen area. The facility showcases Akan-Mashu National Park and introduces the local flora and fauna through pictures and exhibits. Be sure to ask the staff for information on nature tours in the area including guided tour of the local nature trails. On the second-floor of the center, there is a café space for refreshments.

A long history

The rugged terrain of Akan-Mashu National Park was formed by large-scale volcanic eruptions hundreds of thousands of years ago. The ecomuseum's exhibition panels allow visitors to trace the history of the area and discover singular aspects of the park. There is information about the Ainu, the indigenous people who have hunted and gathered here for centuries, as well as the mining industry that flourished during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Another display highlights the hardy alpine vegetation that thrives here despite the harsh environment.

Families welcome

The ecomuseum includes plenty of fun options for play and relaxation, such as a designated kids' space with books and toys, and a craft corner where young visitors can create art from pine cones. The table-tennis table on the first floor is ideal for rainy days, as are the tepee and hammock on the second floor. The second floor also has a bright café space where you can relax with a drink and look out onto the forest of towering Sakhalin spruce trees surrounding the building.

Trails, tours, and rental wear

Two nature trails start at the Kawayu Eco-museum Center. The Sakhalin Spruce Nature Trail is a 60-minute stroll among the Sakhalin spruces at the rear of the ecomuseum. The Tsutsujigahara Nature Trail stretches 2.5 kilometers to the base of Mt. Io, a highly active volcano that spouts steam from vents covering the mountainside. Information on nature tours in the area is available at a designated tour desk in the ecomuseum. And if you find yourself a little underprepared after arriving in Hokkaido, no worries: the center has a range of wet-weather gear for rent.